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LOOKING BACKWARD AND FORWARD

ELLIS MOUNT

Many librarians whose experience is restricted to the past 10 years or so would probably have no appreciation of the current capabilities for automatic dissemination of data afforded by modern technology. They may take these systems for granted. Perhaps a look at what librarians had to contend with twenty-five years ago might make them more appreciative of what we have now. So let's see what conditions were in 1968.

That spring Don Torrance, then with the Bendix Corporation's Aerospace Division in Ann Arbor, Michigan, wrote about what was then an innovative program established by NASA.¹ He described NASA's Selective Dissemination of Information program, which consisted of establishing fields of interest among their contractors, with these fields then used by NASA in mailing microfiche copies of reports matching each contractor's categories of interest. The problem was that even this narrowing of the great number of reports available each month still meant the library was receiving hundreds of reports each week, far too many to pass on to engineers.

Torrance set up a list of special topics of interest chosen by engineers in one department, relying on their recommendations, then each week a librarian would screen the incoming NASA mail for these topics. It worked so well that other departments asked for the same service. Of

the average of 450 microfiche received per week, roughly 40% were found to be of some use and 15% of great value. About one in a hundred was described as "pure gold" by the engineers.

The main problem was the time required for selecting titles—it took about 12 hours a week to peruse the 450 reports, only part of which could be done by a clerk. The rather broad categories used in the NASA cataloging program were not specific enough. Torrance expected that in time the Department of Defense would introduce the same system through its Defense Documentation Center (DDC), further adding to the number of documents to handle.

His article ended without any special solution in sight. How many of us could conceive of living with such a time-demanding method of locating materials for our users? With computerized SDI systems available from most document centers and commercial online databases, we can eliminate this sort of hand-tailored searching, assuming an institution's funds allow for regular use of computerized systems. In time, even better systems may evolve for this vital search service. In the meantime, let's appreciate what we have available today.

¹Torrance, Don. Microtechnology: a problem in dissemination. *Sci-Tech News*. 26: 7-8; 1968 Spring.

Marketing Swap & Shop '93

Looking for great ways to market your library or yourself? The Swap & Shop will help you chart your course for a successful future! This low-cost ticketed event sponsored by the Library Management Division will be held at the SLA Annual Conference on Tuesday, June 8 from 1:30 to 5:00 at the Cincinnati Convention Center. Stop by at your leisure to receive a sample packet of marketing materials, learn tips on successful marketing programs from poster sessions, share ideas with other Special Librarians, and have a snack!

All of the marketing materials donated, along with donors' addresses, will be displayed on bulletin boards. You'll be able to find out who to contact about the ideas you really like. For the first time, marketing materials will be grouped by area of interest. Materials from solo librarians and from vendors will be separated from samples from larger libraries.

You can help ensure the successful exchange of ideas at the Swap & Shop! As soon as possible, please send at least 100 copies of your marketing materials to be included as samples in Swap & Shop packets to the address on the form below. If you are able to send more than 100 copies of your materials, it would be greatly appreciated since 500 people are expected to attend this event.

The Poster Sessions provide individuals who have found especially successful ways to promote their library within their organization the chance to show off their ideas. Informal presentations with displays allow presenters to discuss their methods of marketing their libraries with attendees and answer questions. If you are interested in giving a Poster Session, please call:

Barbara Fletcher

IRC, Brown & Root Inc., 713/676-3380

Please mail or UPS your materials to:

Corilee Christou, Mead Data Central, 9443 Springboro Pike, Dayton, OH 45401
Attn: Marketing Swap & Shop

****All materials must be received by May 28 to be included in the packets.****

Name _____

Organization _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____ Number of copies enclosed _____

Solo Librarian _____ Vendor / Consultant _____ Other _____

_____ Please check here if you are also willing to mail out single copies on request, if supplies run out.

_____ Please indicate with yes or no if the Library Management Division has your permission to reprint your ideas in a book of selected Swap & Shop marketing ideas.